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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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March 30, 1983

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The enclosed revised Preliminary Environmental Review has been prepared by the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences concerning Andrele Wrecking and Salvage in Madison County. The original review dated August 24, 1982 is on file with your office. The revised document was prepared in response to public comments on the proposed action received by the department in writing and at a public hearing held on the issue in Sheridan, Montana, on November 4, 1982. Copies of the revised document have been made available to all interested parties.

Feel free to contact me for any additional information.

Sincerely,

LARRY D. MITCHELL  
Solid Waste Management Bureau  
Environmental Sciences Division

LDM:vc  
Encls.

cc: Tom Ellerhoff, Environmental Sciences Division, DHES  
Montana State Library, Harold Chambers, Capitol Complex, Helena, MT

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Cogswell Building, Helena, Montana 59620  
(406) 449-2821

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Division/Bureau Environmental Sciences Division/Solid Waste Management Bureau  
Project or Application Marlowe Andrele/dba/Andrele Wrecking and Salvage  
Description of Project Proposal to establish and license a motor vehicle  
wrecking facility near Sheridan, MT. The attached map shows the exact  
location.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments on Attached Pages
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity and distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability and moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X			X
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical and archaeological sites					X	

# POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments on Attached Pages
1. Social structures and mores				X		X
2. Cultural uniqueness and diversity			X			X
3. Local and state tax base & tax revenue			X			X
4. Agricultural or industrial production			X			X
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income			X			X
7. Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities				X		
8. Quantity and distribution of employment			X			X
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services			X			X
11. Industrial & commercial activity			X			X
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		X
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows			X			X

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals or groups contributing to this PER. Madison County Health Dept., DHES

Legal Division, Water Quality Bureau, MT Dept. of Fish Wildlife & Parks,

Local residents and property owners.

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS Not Necessary

PER Prepared by: Larry D. Mitchell  
LARRY D. MITCHELL

Date: 3/10/83

DHES/ESD-2

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

Application has been made to the Solid Waste Management Bureau, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences for a license to establish, operate and maintain a private motor vehicle wrecking facility on property owned by the applicant. The proposed site is approximately one mile northeast of Highway 287 on Ramshorn Creek Road south of Sheridan, Montana. The applicant owns and will reside on the thirty acre parcel, a portion of which is under consideration for use as a motor vehicle wrecking facility.

Such facilities must be licensed annually for operation. State law requires that, as a condition for licensing, wrecking facilities must be screened from public view such that junked vehicles stored at the site are not visible from a point six feet above the centerline of any public road. Also, wrecking yard sites must be in compliance with local land use zoning ordinances and regulations.

According to a signed certification on the license application, Madison county has no zoning regulations which would prohibit the establishment of a wrecking facility at this location. The proposed site is located such that natural topography screens most of the location from public view. Some additional artificial screening is needed, however, in order to completely screen the facility. Portions of the yard are visible from a short  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile section of Ramshorn Creek road immediately in front of the site and, at a distance, briefly visible from a section of county road to the south. The site is capable of being screened. No license may be issued until the screening is in place.



## POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats
2. Water quality, quantity and distribution

The proposed site for this facility is a relatively flatbottomed ravine approximately 500 feet wide. East of center through this draw is an intermittent water course approximately three feet deep and five to ten feet wide. Bare gravels in the bottom of portions of this water course and public comments indicate that the draw carries water at least briefly during some years or some parts of each year.

Climatological and precipitation data and observations of soil development and vegetative types in the immediate area indicate that this is a semi-arid site not prone to flooding and lacking in ground water resources. The region receives an average of 12 inches of precipitation annually. The applicant's residential water well is reportedly several hundred feet in depth. The ravine drains a very small area uphill from the site; additional flow being diverted to either side by ridges which form the topographical screening on the east and west boundaries of the proposed facility. Climatological modeling by the Water Quality bureau reports that for this area a 10-year, 24-hour storm can be expected to result in only 1.8 inches of precipitation in the form of rain.

The water course leads into Ramshorn Creek and the Vigilante Canal, an agricultural irrigation project, approximately 150 yards downstream from the proposed vehicle storage area. The water course at its lower end is not very well defined as it broadens out near the creek. From all appearances and available information, this particular drainage does not transport water except briefly during periods of heavy spring snowmelt or intense precipitation events.

The applicant has proposed storing salvage vehicle inventory in an area behind a dirt berm to be constructed east and west across the draw and north of his existing residence. If this screening technique is used, some type of culverting or other diversion method must be utilized to maintain the integrity of the drainage.

The area behind the proposed screen will be excavated to provide fill material for the berm and to level the sloped storage area as much as possible. This should provide improved site workability and minimize the screening effort and maximize its effectiveness. Boulders and bedrock outcroppings may present some excavation difficulty and limit this effort. Some increase in sedimentation from surface runoff may result until the exposed surface stabilizes. Graveling the storage yard would reduce this impact. Due to the small area to be excavated and the low annual precipitation, this impact on down stream water resources is not expected to be significant.





Waste fluids such as used oils, fuels, acids, coolants and others may be spilled in small quantities as a result of activities incidental to motor vehicle dismantling. The soil's capacity to absorb these anticipated quantities, evaporation, and decomposition by physical, chemical and biological processes should minimize any potential for pollution or damage to surface and especially, ground water resources. Off-site disposal of deliberately drained vehicle fluids will be required. Montana law prohibits the disposal of liquid or solid wastes in an area where they are likely to cause pollution or create public nuisance. Violations of water pollution laws are enforceable by the Montana Water Quality Act.

Operationally, no junk vehicles or debris may be stored between the seasonal high water marks of the intermittent water course through the proposed facility. If a potential for damage from runoff exists, it is recommended that the drainage and/or the area above the vehicle storage site be bermed to divert water from entering the site or the drainage.

From inspections of and experience with other motor vehicle wrecking facilities in Montana, soil contamination from vehicle fluids is not generally a major problem. Combined with the limited size and scope of this particular operation and the dry climate, impacts from this facility on water quality, quantity, distribution and aquatic life and habitats are not expected to be significant.

Concern has been raised regarding the potential impacts this facility may have on terrestrial life and habitats, particularly in regard to native wildlife populations. Impacts on non-game species are difficult to determine as little baseline data exists. It is doubtful that significant amounts of actual habitat will be lost. The impacts on habitat and populations are primarily the result of human disturbance and development pressuring or destroying areas of traditional or current use in the general region of the development. In that sense, the damage to the resource has begun not with the actual siting of this development, but with the subdivision of the area in general. By encouraging denser human populations and increased human/wildlife contacts, the subdivision of the whole into parcels of lesser size and the resulting diverse ownership has set into motion the inherent wildlife conflicts which will result.

Review of the application by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department supports the position that elk and deer wintering in this region will be displaced. Again, any such displacement is expected to result not exclusively because of this proposed action, but due to the general increase in human activity and development resulting from the previous subdivision of the historical agricultural land use. The department's review indicates that even with the past agricultural use, there has been a history of wildlife conflicts in the Horse Creek-Ramshorn area.



The siting of this facility is not likely to reduce these conflicts, nor is it likely to increase them beyond that from many other types of non-regulated land use activities. However, since this proposal is for a business activity rather than a strictly residential use of the property, some additional impacts may result other than those inherent to the type of business. Obviously and most significant will be the increased traffic to and from the site by potential used parts customers and by the operator in his inventory collection activities. This impact should be mitigated somewhat since traffic and human activity will probably be greatest during times of the year and times of the day when game animals are not concentrated or utilizing the ranges heavily.

Noise is a characteristic inherent to the operation of a motor vehicle wrecking facility. Certainly an aggressive, twenty acre, ten employee business will generate a certain amount of noise in association with routine vehicle salvaging activities. This particular proposal is envisioned as a smaller one-man operation. Noise levels will probably not be much greater than that from a non-state regulated business such as a repair shop or body shop. It is recommended, however, that noise levels be minimized during winter months in order to mitigate potential impacts on wildlife distribution and stress. Certain activities such as car crushing and recycling should not take place during winter months. This is not expected to be a hardship on the applicant since most such operations necessarily occur during summer weather conditions to avoid damage to machinery and property. Also, the market for scrap metals is traditionally highest in the spring, summer and fall.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality

The proposed excavation and leveling of the yard surface will remove much of the native grassland vegetation, and redistribute some surface soils. As previously mentioned, some minor and temporary increase in sedimentation and erosion due to runoff may be expected with the loss of soil stability. This impact can be minimized by re-seeding with appropriate vegetative cover species or graveling the yard surface. Muddy or dusty wrecking yards do not make for pleasant or efficient working conditions. Present vegetation consists primarily of a dry sagebrush-cactus-native grassland of poor grazing quality.

#### 5. Aesthetics

The Motor Vehicle Recycling and Disposal law and rule require that all junk vehicles and motor vehicle wrecking facilities be screened from public view. Public view is defined as that point six feet above the center line of any public road. Wrecking facilities must be screened such that junk vehicles held in storage are out of public view.

This proposed facility is currently shielded from public view by natural topography in all but one area of the site. Two parallel ridges on the east and west boundary of the site screen the yard from those vantage points. There are no public roads to the north from which the facility can be seen. The facility will need to be screened from a short section of



Ramshorn Creek Road to the south of the facility and from a point along a county road to the south. Screening from Ramshorn Creek Road especially is made somewhat difficult by the slope of the proposed storage site. It slopes uphill away from the road either requiring a relatively high fence or barrier, a series of fences in parallel, placement of the barrier away from the road, leveling of the site behind the barrier or some workable combination of those techniques.

The applicant has proposed the construction of an earth barrier of sufficient height back away from the road in combination with the leveling of the uphill slope. If properly constructed and seeded to improve stability and aesthetics, this proposal should adequately screen the facility from view in compliance with the law.

#### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Social structures and mores
2. Cultural uniqueness and diversity

Considerable public comment was received regarding the perceived impact on these criteria attributable to the establishment and licensing of this facility. Most of the comments are more properly addressed by land use managers and local government zoning officials. The current land use of the immediate surrounding area is or has been agricultural, particularly livestock grazing. With the subdivision of the property, one of the parcels which is currently under consideration for use as this wrecking facility, the area will probably be utilized more for residential or rural residential housing. No private deed restrictions or subdivision covenants have been discovered and no local land use zoning exists, so the conclusion that the future land use will be residential is purely speculative. The area could just as easily develop as a cluster of small commercial or industrial business.

Subdivision in the absence of land use controls will undoubtedly have some minor impact on cultural uniqueness and diversity. Establishing a commercial business in an area currently used as a recreational corridor and generally rural in nature will increase traffic and human activity in the area. The quantity of that activity and impact on the area depends primarily on the success and viability of the proposed business. Negative public comments fearful of impacts on social mores, increases in crime and vandalism are extremely speculative. In any case, these impacts are not expected to be significant as a result of this action.

3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue

The successful operation of a commercial motor vehicle wrecking facility in addition to the applicant's construction of a residence and future shop building should have a minor but positive impact on local and state tax base and revenues. The degree of impact is primarily dependent on the future viability of the business but in any case it should be greater than that resulting from the previous agricultural use on the same parcel of land.



#### 4. Agricultural or industrial production

This project will remove a total of 30 acres from agricultural production. This impact realistically began when the area was subdivided into parcels too small for agricultural uses to be economically feasible. The establishment of a wrecking facility should not result in this being an irreversible land use trend as it can easily be closed out and removed. However, the sale of smaller parcels resulting from the subdivision has probably begun an irreversible trend towards decreasing agricultural production.

A short or long term increase in industrial production is not anticipated and will not in any case be in direct response to this project. Motor vehicle wrecking facilities do not ordinarily cause the establishment of new secondary or support trades or industries. Existing area trades and businesses should be sufficient to provide any needed services.

#### 6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income

#### 8. Quantity and distribution of employment

As a commercial business this project could have a minor but positive impact on these criteria. Certainly it will provide an employment and income opportunity for the applicant/operator. Measurements of these impacts are impossible since they are directly dependent on the aggressiveness of the applicant. Madison County currently has one successful licensed motor vehicle wrecking facility in the Ennis area and one recently licensed facility starting business near Waterloo. Two more are under consideration for licensing. Only one of these is planned as a commercial business. There are no licensed motor vehicle wrecking facilities to the south in Beaverhead County. There is no quota system on the number of wrecking facility licenses issued in Montana. Further, the state is not authorized to make licensing decisions based upon financial viability of a particular project or its chances for successful operation. Flathead County has 19 licensed motor vehicle wrecking facilities serving a population of 52,000 or one facility per 2,736 people. If all five Madison County facilities are licensed they will serve a county population of 5,400. If Beaverhead County is included, population totals increase to 13,600. Additionally the current industry trend is to service populations outside the immediate home market. The Ennis facility, for example, frequently provides used parts and materials to markets in Bozeman, Butte, and Billings.

In addition to providing employment and income opportunities to the operator and any additional employees necessary for future business, the successful operation of a motor vehicle wrecking facility can have positive secondary impacts on such businesses and trades as construction, transportation and shipping, communications, machinery and vehicle repair and maintenance and recycling.





#### 10. Demands for government services

Periodic routine field inspections of the facility will be required by state and local junk vehicle program officials to assure that the facility is being maintained and operated in compliance with the Motor Vehicle Recycling and Disposal law and rule. A minor amount of time will be necessary to establish government files for the facility and in routine correspondence and communication on licensing and other industry concerns.

Additional minor increases may be realized for local government services such as law enforcement, solid waste disposal, road maintenance and utility and construction permit facilitation. Again the property subdivision and construction of a residence on the property has already impacted these government services. Law enforcement, solid waste disposal and road maintenance impacts may be increased in particular due to this particular proposal.

Any commercial business so located may require additional patrols by law enforcement agencies to protect property. Obviously it is in the owner's best interest to provide protection for his business as well. The limited access to the site and fact that the owner/operator plans to live on the premises should minimize any vandalism or theft problems. Additionally, its placement one mile off the main county highway should serve to minimize the problem and keep it local in nature.

Ramshorn Creek Road is a county roadway leading from Highway 287 to the headwaters of Ramshorn Creek on U.S. Forest Service land. Another county road near the facility site provides access between Ramshorn Creek Road and Highway 287 to the south. Both of these one mile sections of county road can expect increased traffic from present and future subdivision development of the area and from the establishment of this facility. Traffic from potential business customers and the operator's vehicles can be expected to increase. Hauling salvage vehicles to the site on medium duty flatbed trucks should not have any greater impact on the road than the typical loaded farm truck of comparable size. However, with the increased use and abuse during adverse road conditions, it is conceivable that the lower one mile sections of these two roads may need more frequent maintenance or upgrading. Since these roads service the applicant's residence as well as his proposed business, it should be obvious that road abuse will have its greatest impact on him. It is unreasonable to expect that the establishment of this facility will lead to deliberate or even unintentional damage.

The solid waste disposal systems in Madison County in general and in the Sheridan area specifically are currently not in compliance with state law. Additional waste generated by additional residential units or commercial businesses will increase the burden on an already inadequate system. Atypical commercial refuse generated by this facility will consist primarily of unrecyclable scrap tires and fuel tanks. All other automotive scrap and metals are recyclable through private systems or the county junk vehicle program. The establishment of a private motor vehicle wrecking facility should actually decrease the financial impact on the county junk vehicle program and solid waste systems by providing a non-tax supported outlet for motor vehicles and recyclable metal scrap discards.



#### 11. Industrial and commercial activity

The licensing of this facility will establish a commercial business in an area of predominantly agricultural or rural residential use. With exception of some historical mining development in the mountains to the northeast, most commercial or industrial activity has been confined to the transportation corridor along Highway 287. A commercial gravel operation, for example, is located at the intersection of Highway 287 and Ramshorn Road. The area immediately surrounding this proposed wrecking facility has been subdivided and sold or is for sale in parcels of 20 acres or more. Establishing this commercial venture in the absence of any local land use controls may lead other property owners or purchasers to consider the property as available for commercial businesses. Siting this facility may alter the current public perception that the area is exclusively residential or rural agricultural in nature. In this regard, the siting of this facility may have a minor impact on future commercial or industrial activity.

Beyond the initial construction phase, this facility is unlikely to have any significant impact on existing commercial or industrial business or activities. However, certain existing support businesses may be impacted slightly as services are required for the maintenance and operation of this business.

Most directly impacted will be the junk vehicle collection activity of the Madison County junk vehicle program and existing private motor vehicle wrecking facilities which may all be competing for the same raw material for their businesses. Only a limited number of salvage vehicles are available within an economically feasible geographic range of operations. See also comments under items 4, 6 and 8.

#### 13. Locally adopted environmental plan and goals

Local government has the authority to establish land use zoning to mitigate potential impacts by controlling the size and type of development proposed within its jurisdiction. The Motor Vehicle Recycling and Disposal law prohibits the establishment of motor vehicle wrecking facilities in locations in conflict with local land use zoning ordinances or regulations. The license application for this facility certifies that Madison County zoning ordinances do not prohibit the establishment of this facility at this location.

#### 14. Transportation networks and traffic flows

Present transportation networks are in place to provide access to the facility. Access from Highway 287 is immediately available from two county roads which intersect near the facility site. Both are improved dirt based county roads. The facility is approximately one mile off Highway 287 by either route. Increased road usage by this and other development may require additional county maintenance including grading or surfacing depending on the degree of use and severity of impact. Public comments indicate that these roads are periodically damaged by traffic during wet



conditions and that washouts and erosion from improper irrigation practices sometimes occur. As additional parcels of the subdivision around this proposed facility are sold and developed, an increase in usage is anticipated. Combined with additional traffic usage attributable to this facility, it is likely that greater demands will be placed on local government for road improvements.

See also comments under item 10.

